

**RESOLUTION AND MEMORIAL IN TRIBUTE TO  
JULIUS LeVONNE CHAMBERS**  
April 4, 2014

MAY IT PLEASE THE COURT, on behalf of the Mecklenburg County Bar, I present this Resolution and Memorial honoring the life and memory of Julius LeVonne Chambers.

Chambers was born in Mt. Gilead, North Carolina on October 6, 1936 to William Lee and Matilda Chambers. He died on August 2, 2013. In 1960, Chambers married Vivian Giles who shared his goals and aspirations. Chambers' effectiveness as an advocate for others was possible because of Vivian Chambers' unwavering commitment to the Civil Rights Movement. Her support enabled him to fight the good fight. Her death on June 23, 2012 was a great loss to him. Chambers' elder brother, Dr. Kenneth Chambers, and his wife, Grace, survive Chambers as do his two children, Derrick LeVonne Chambers (Margaret), and his daughter, Judy LaVern Chambers. He is also survived by his three grandchildren, Bré Simone, Amaya and Myles. Hanna Assefa of Raleigh, originally of Ethiopia, came to this country to complete her education and became a part of the Chambers family.

Chambers attended segregated schools in Montgomery County and, after graduating high school, he enrolled at North Carolina Central University, (then North Carolina College at Durham), and graduated *Summa Cum Laude* in 1958 with a B.A. in History. He earned an M.A. in History from the University of Michigan. In 1959, he entered the University of North Carolina School of Law where he served as the first African-American Editor-in-Chief of the North Carolina Law Review and graduated first in his class in 1962. Chambers then attended Columbia University School of Law and earned his L.L.M.

Chambers began his distinguished law career as one of the two first interns at the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. ("LDF") after his successful law school career was noticed by then Director-Counsel Thurgood Marshall. After his internship, he returned to North Carolina where he set up practice in Charlotte in 1964. He operated as a one man shop until he hired Adam Stein and James E. Ferguson, II, in 1967. In 1968, they formed the first integrated law firm in North Carolina for which he provided strategic leadership and guidance as the firm pursued its mission of zealously fighting to ensure equality and justice for all. During his tenure, the firm developed into one of the country's premiere firms in the area of civil rights. Chambers, his partners, and support staff, embarked on an ambitious journey of eradicating discrimination in employment, education, housing, business, public accommodations, criminal justice, voting rights and all other aspects of society where it existed. His fearless leadership resulted in a series of lawsuits, including major class actions against private and governmental entities, which helped shape the jurisprudence of this state and country. He successfully argued countless cases in both state and federal courts, including the appellate courts and the United States Supreme Court. During his early years in practice,

his efforts were violently attacked and he saw his car, house, and office fire bombed. The fire bombings did not deter him from championing the efforts to bring about equality for all people.

After twenty years in the private practice of law, Chambers moved on to become the third Director-Counsel and President of LDF in August 1984. In his nine years with LDF, he provided visionary and strategic leadership that allowed LDF to continue both in the vanguard of the civil rights movement in courtrooms and as a leading participant on policy debates in Congress. At the end of his tenure, he left LDF with a highly-motivated and engaged staff, an endowment, and a business plan to carry its mission forward.

In 1993, Chambers returned to North Carolina as Chancellor of his *alma mater*, North Carolina Central University (“NCCU”). He accepted the position as an opportunity to nurture and explore his keen interest in the education and development of young people. At NCCU, he applied the same visionary and strategic energy which had served him well in his earlier undertakings. During his tenure, NCCU saw tremendous growth in all areas of the institution, including the construction of the Julius L. Chambers Biomedical/Biotechnology Research Institute. Under his leadership, the NCCU launched a fifty million dollar capital fundraising campaign and established its first ten Endowed Chairs, including the one million dollar Charles Hamilton Houston Chair at the School of Law.

Chambers was no stranger to academia. While practicing law in Charlotte and during his term at LDF, he served as Adjunct Professor at Columbia Law School, University of Virginia School of Law, University of Pennsylvania Law School, and University of Michigan Law School. He served as the Charles Hamilton Houston Distinguished Professor of Law at North Carolina Central University School of Law. His final teaching position was as a Clinical Professor of Law at the University of North Carolina School of Law.

In 2001, Chambers retired from North Carolina Central University and returned to the practice of law at the firm he established, which was then known as Ferguson, Stein, Gresham & Sumter, P.A. He continued to practice actively until 2013 with the same zeal and commitment he had when he started. Concurrent with his practice at the firm in his “retirement,” Chambers accepted the invitation of the University of North Carolina School of Law to serve as the Inaugural Director of the UNC Center for Civil Rights. The UNC Center for Civil Rights trains the new generation of committed civil rights advocates, provides sophisticated social, scientific and other research, and provides strategic legal counsel and services to lower income and non-white communities in North Carolina and the southeast. He retired from that position in 2010.

His work spoke for him. Chambers was an inspiration and mentor to everyone with whom he worked. He encouraged them to be the best that they could be and demanded excellence. Chambers directly impacted prominent members of the legal, medical, education, business, government and political communities in this city, state and nation. His impact was also felt internationally, particularly in South Africa, where in the

late 1970s he began a dialogue with black South Africans who were trying to learn how members of the African-American Bar in this country organized to address civil rights issues. He, along with The Honorable A. Leon Higginbotham, Jr., and Nathaniel Jones, traveled to South Africa to meet with a group of black lawyers in the early 1980s. From these meetings, the Black Lawyers Association of South Africa and its Legal Education Center were founded and modeled largely upon LDF's structure. Many of the persons he met and mentored in South Africa became leading members of the bar and judiciary of South Africa.

Chambers' success in his undertakings was due in large part to the values and work ethics instilled in him by his parents. They were both small business people and expected their children to do well and serve the community. Chambers revered his parents and always wanted his efforts to be worthy of their respect. He was honored locally and nationally through many awards. He has received some of the highest honors from colleges, universities, the American Bar Association, and various state bar associations, including the State of North Carolina and Mecklenburg County. He was awarded twenty-four Honorary Doctorates from colleges and universities. Awards have been named in his honor, including the Mecklenburg County Bar's Julius L. Chambers Diversity Champion Award and the Eta Mu Lambda Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity's Julius L. Chambers Humanitarian and Social Reform Award. In 2007, his hometown honored him by naming a street near his homeplace "Julius L. Chambers Avenue." A standing-room-only-crowd of well-wishers from all races, walks of life, ages, creeds, and colors gathered to witness the occasion.

Even though Chambers spent long hours hard at work fulfilling his professional obligations, he knew the value of leisure time. He was a man devoted to his family. Spending time with family and friends, watching sporting events on television or attending them in person, and boating provided needed distractions. His love of golf was well known; he incorporated it into his civil rights work. In 1978, he and a number of his golfing buddies established a golf tournament in conjunction with the North Carolina Chapter of the LDF Fundraising Dinner Committee. Now named in his honor, the Julius Chambers Invitational continues as a fundraiser for LDF.

Chambers never met a stranger. He would greet individuals, in all contexts from all walks of life as follows: "Hello, how you do?" "What's your name?" "Where are you from?" "Who are your people?" "Do you know ...?" If it was a young person, he always asked if they were in school. If they were not in school, he encouraged them to go to school, and if they were already, he talked to them about it and what they planned to do after they completed their studies.

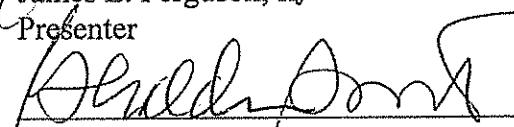
Chambers was a soft-spoken man with a friendly demeanor. He was humble and respectful of others. He understood the claims and plights of the people who sought his representation from near and far. Their courage and strength inspired and humbled him. That understanding and empathy was clear to all of his clients. He saw potential in every young person. When Chambers saw a young person, he visualized the next lawyer, doctor, scientist, political leader, educator, and business person.

We have been blessed to have Julius Chambers in our lives and this community has been blessed and enriched by his presence and hard work. We are assembled in this courtroom, a very integrated crowd, due in large part to his personal efforts to demonstrate the competency of an African-American lawyer to desegregate all aspects of our society, and to ensure inconclusiveness in all that we do. Chambers tried many cases in this courtroom, including *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Bd. of Ed.* and *Griggs v. Duke Power Co.* He also led the efforts in ensuring that the Voting Rights Act applied to all elections, including the election of judges in North Carolina, and through litigation, legislation was passed to ensure the electability of minority judges to the Superior Court bench. At a function where Chambers and his brother, Dr. Kenneth Chambers, were honored for their pioneering work in their respective fields in Charlotte, a very truthful observation was made that every person in that room had directly benefited from the work of those two people. I believe that the same can be said here today. The Bars of this County, of this state and this nation are today more diverse and inclusive than they were when Chambers began practicing law due in large part to his efforts.

So, Your Honors, with a deep sense of gratitude and appreciation, we the undersigned respectfully move that:

1. The Court shall adjourn this day in memory of and honor of Julius LeVonne Chambers;
2. The Resolution and Memorial be received by the Court and inscribed in its minutes; and
3. Copies of this Resolution and Memorial be made available to members of his family.

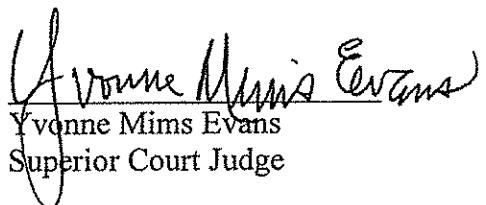
Respectfully submitted this 4<sup>th</sup> day of April, 2014.

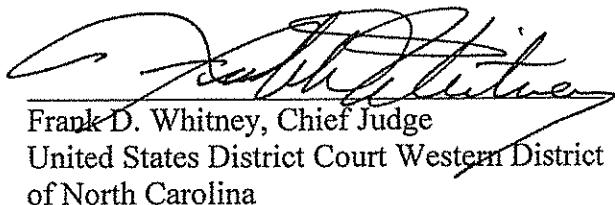
  
James E. Ferguson, II  
Presenter  
  
Geraldine Sumter  
Presenter

  
Robert E. Harrington  
Past-President Mecklenburg County Bar

  
George V. Hanna, III  
Mecklenburg County Bar Memorials  
Committee Co-Chair

The foregoing "Resolution and Memorial in Tribute to Julius LeVonne Chambers" is hereby Approved and Accepted in all respects.

  
Yvonne Mims Evans  
Superior Court Judge

  
Frank D. Whitney, Chief Judge  
United States District Court Western District  
of North Carolina